

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
----- 073960

R 061022Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3788

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 MANILA 4796

EXDIS

E O 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, RP

SUBJ: MACAPAGAL: AN ASSESSMENT OF SORTS

REF: MANILA 4596

1. SUMMARY. WAS FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL'S EXTRAORDINARY ACT OF SEEKING SANCTUARY LAST WEEK AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE THE BEHAVIOR OF A FRIGHTENED, FOOLHARDY MAN OUT OF TOUCH WITH REALITY OR OF A CANNY OPPORTUNIST AND POLITICAL STRATEGIST? PERHAPS NEITHER OR BOTH, BUT MORE ONE THAN THE OTHER, AND THE WEIGHT OF OPINION AMONG THOSE VERY FEW EMBASSY OFFICERS PRIVY TO ALL DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS CASE CONTINUES, AS IN REFTEL, TO FAVOR THE FORMER VIEW. I DO NOT DISAGREE. HOWEVER, MY DIRECT OBSERVATION OF MACAPAGAL IN THE EVENT AND MY INSTINCT, RELATIVELY UNTUTORED IN THE PHILIPPINE ENVIRONMENT, SUGGESTS THAT SOME CREDENCE BE GIVEN THE INTERPRETATION OF MACAPAGAL AS AN INTROVERTED MAN BESET WITH ANXIETY BY HIS PERCEPTION OF THE THREAT TO COUNTRY AND SELF OF THE ACCUMULATION OF AUTHORITARIAN POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC POWER BY A PRESIDENT EVIDENTLY DISPOSED TO SEEK TO PERPETUATE THAT POWER THROUGH HIS WIFE AND, IN THE PROCESS, WILLING TO RISK A CONTESTED SUCCESSION AND INVITE MILITARY TAKEOVER. ALSO, MACAPAGAL APPARENTLY FEELS SOME RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRESIDENT MARCOS, HIS FORMER PROTEGE, AND "BIG MISTAKE." END SUMMARY.

2. IT SEEMS TO ME NOT ENTIRELY IMPLAUSIBLE THAT MACAPAGAL,  
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DRIVEN BY GENERAL ANXIETY AND SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY,

AND ALARMED BY MARCOS'S RECENT SUCCESSES IN WINNING FOREIGN APPROVAL AND INFLUENCING INTERNATIONAL OPINION, WHILE TIGHTENING THE SCREWS AT HOME, ABANDONED HIS CUSTOMARY CAUTION OVER RECENT MONTHS TO EMBARK UPON A CAMPAIGN, DEVISED DURING YEARS OF QUIET BROODING, TO FOCUS NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION ON THE INADEQUACIES AND UNCONSTITUTIONALITY OF THE MARCOS REGIME -- HOPING THEREBY TO DETER MARCOS FAMILY EXCESSES AND TO UNDERMINE MARCOS AUTHORITY. A LAWYER'S DREAM, A ROMANTIC'S VISION, A LOSER'S LAST GASP? PERHAPS, FOR MACAPAGAL IS ALL OF THESE, AS WELL AS AN OLD POL AND ONE-TIME PRESIDENT WITH A DIM FUTURE.

3. THE KEY TO MACAPAGAL AND TO HIS PRESENT STRATEGY, AND THUS TO HIS DRAMATIC BID FOR ASYLUM AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY, LIES PERHAPS IN HIS NEWLY PUBLISHED BOOK, DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES. FOR AT LEAST TWO YEARS, MACAPAGAL SEEMS TO HAVE LABORED TO DISTILL INTO THAT WORK THE BASIS OF HIS DISSENT TO CONTINUING MARTIAL LAW AND HIS ADVOCACY OF THE DEMOCRATIC ALTERNATIVE. THE RESULT IS NOT GREAT POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY, BUT IT IS THE MOST COMPREHENSIVE PUBLIC CONDEMNATION OF MARCOS FOUR-YEAR RULE BY DECREE EXTANT IN THE PHILIPPINES. AS SUCH IT REPRESENTS AN INSIDIOUS INTELLECTUAL EMBARRASSMENT TO THE MARCOSES. MACAPAGAL KNEW AND PRESUMABLY INTENDED AT LEAST THAT. AND HIS ENTIRE CAMPAIGN SINCE THE LETTER IN JANUARY TO MARCOS URGING THAT AN INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BE CONVENED MAY BE BEST UNDERSTOOD AS AN EFFORT TO ESTABLISH HIS CREDENTIALS FOR FURTHER ANTI-REGIME ACTIVITY AT HOME AND ABROAD.

4. BUT MERE LETTERS AND WORD OF MOUTH COMMUNICATION WOULD THEMSELVES HARDLY SUFFICE, NOR WOULD A BOOK QUIETLY DISTRIBUTED AND QUIETLY CONFISCATED. ACCORDINGLY, MACAPAGAL HIT UPON THE NOTION OF COMBINING THE PUBLIC CIRCULATION OF HIS BOOK WITH THE DRAMATIC ACT OF SEEKING TEMPORARY SANCTUARY IN THE AMERICAN EMBASSY. HE OF COURSE KNEW THAT HE WAS IN LITTLE SERIOUS DANGER OF ARREST BEFORE THE BOOK WAS CIRCULATED. AFTER HAVING DENOUNCED THE REGIME PUBLICLY IN PRINT, HOWEVER, HE MAY HAVE ASSUMED

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DOUBTS, GIVEN MARCOS'S "HARSE REACTION," TO THE PRIVATE LETTERS OF JANUARY, AND GIVEN HIS OWN ESTIMATE OF THE RUTHLESSNESS AND MOUNTING INFLUENCE OF MRS. MARCOS. IN ANY EVENT, DURING OUR DISCUSSIONS, MACAPAGAL EMPHASIZED THE "IMELDA FACTOR," ARGUED THAT HE "COULD NOT AFFORD TO LOSE ANY MOBILITY," AND EVEN CITED THE RECENT CASE OF THE SHOEMAKER MYSTERIOUSLY MURDERED AT CAMP CRAME.

5. THUS, FROM MACAPAGAL'S PERSPECTIVE, SEEKING ASYLUM EVEN WITHOUT MUCH EXPECTATION OF OBTAINING IT, MADE SENSE, BEARING IN MIND HIS DETERMINATION TO GET HIS THESIS PROMINENTLY ON THE PUBLIC RECORD. INDEED, SEEKING ASYLUM MAY WELL HAVE BEEN THE ONLY POSSIBILITY FOR HIM CONCURRENTLY TO: (A) ATTRACT WIDESPREAD DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ATTENTION TO HIS VIEWS; (B) EXTRACT SOME MEASURE OF GOP ASSURANCE CONCERNING HIS PERSON, AND (C) INTERJECT THE "PROTECTING POWER" OF THE UNITED STATES INTO HIS PERSONAL FATE. I AM REMINDED, ALSO, THAT IT IS COMMON AMONG FILIPINOS OF MACAPAGAL'S GENERATION TO ASSUME THAT SOMEHOW THE UNITED STATE IS THE ANSWER TO EVERYTHING.

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FM AMEMBASSY MANILA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3789

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 MANILA 4796  
EXDIS

6. IT MAY BE ENLIGHTENING TO RECALL THAT MACAPAGAL NEVER REALLY SOUGHT POLITICAL ASYLUM FROM US IN THE CLASSICAL SENSE, BUT RATHER HE APPARENTLY ENVISAGED "ONE TO THREE" DAYS "SANCTUARY" DURING WHICH GOP INTENTIONS TOWARD HIM MIGHT BE "CLARIFIED." ALSO, I RECALL THE CALMNESS WITH WHICH MACAPAGAL TOOK THE NEWS THAT THE UNITED STATES HAD NOT ACCEDED TO HIS REQUEST, AND THAT HE DECLINED MY INVITATION TO PROVIDE TRANSPORTATION TO RETURN HIM TO HIS HOME, PREFERRING TO CALL HIS FAMILY AND LEAVE WITH THEM PERHAPS EN ROUTE INTO PREMEDITATED SECLUSION.

7. THE ABOVE EXPLANATION IS LARGELY SPECULATIVE. BUT FOR ME AT LEAST, IT HELPS TO ADDRESS THE QUESTION I SINCE HAVE BEEN HEARING FROM FILIPINOS IN AND OUT OF GOVERNMENT, "WHY DID HE DO IT?" THE QUESTION IS ASKED RHETORICALLY, ALBEIT WITH INTENSITY, MUCH HEAD-SHAKING AND WONDERMENT.

8. I MAY BE WRONG, OF COURSE, AND OTHERS WHO KNOW SOMETHING

OF THE MAN AND HIS CHARACTERISTICS FIND IT DIFFICULT TO BELIEVE THAT HIS ACT WAS TERRIBLY CALCULATED. FOR, IT IS ARGUED, TO ASSUME THAT WOULD BE TO ASSUME THAT MACAPAGAL THOUGHT OF HIS CRUSADE AS A LONELY EFFORT, AND TO ASSUME THAT HE DISCOUNTED THE IMPORTANCE OF A FILIPINO FOLLOWING OR THE LIKELIHOOD OF HIS ASYLUM REQUEST DESTROYING THE CREDIBILITY HE MAY STILL HAVE HAD AMONG FILIPINOS.

9. NONETHELESS, ON BALANCE, I BELIEVE THAT MACAPAGAL HAD A GAME PLAN OF SORTS, THAT HIS VISIT TO THE RESIDENCE WAS PART OF THIS LARGER CALCULATION, THAT HE WAS PREPARED FOR OUR REJECTION, AND THAT WE HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF THE SECRET

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MACAPAGAL EFFORT TO ESTABLISH HIS THINKING AND HIS POSITION IN ANY RETURN TO "DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES." LITERALLY, AT LEAST, MACAPAGAL ALREADY HAS FOLLOWED UP WITH US TO THE EXTENT OF SENDING INSCRIBED COPIES OF TWO OF HIS PREVIOUS BOOKS TO MY HOME WITH A NOTE EXPRESSING HIS APPRECIATION TO THE EMBASSY FOR THE "CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE" OF THE TREATMENT ACCORDED TO HIM.

10. IF PRESIDENT MARCOS IS THINKING ALONG SIMILAR LINES, IT SHOULD BE NO SURPRISE THAT HIS INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATION IS ANXIOUS TO KEEP AN EYE ON THE MAN WHO, IF HE DID NOT DESTROY HIMSELF AT THE AMBASSADOR'S RESIDENCE LAST THURSDAY, MIGHT YET, IF ONLY BY DEFAULT, ASSUME THE ROLE OF LONG-TERM THREAT OR AT LEAST EMBARRASSMENT TO THE MARCOSES.

11. BUT, DOES ONE MOVE AGAINST A FORMER PRESIDENT, PARTICULARLY IF HE ALREADY MAY HAVE BLOWN OFF HIS OWN FOOT? THERE ARE VARIOUS WAYS TO MOVE, OF COURSE, INCLUDING CHARACTER ASSASSINATION AND RIDICULE. IN THIS REGARD, WE PROBABLY ALSO HAVE NOT HEARD THE LAST OF THE ALLEGATION THAT CIA MACHINATIONS TO TOPPLE MARCOS WERE BEHIND MACAPAGAL'S BID FOR ASYLUM. ALTHOUGH OUR FORTUITOUS OPPORTUNITY TO REGISTER A DIRECT AND CATEGORICAL DENIAL MAY HELP (SEPARATE COMMUNICATION). MEANWHILE, THE WILEY FOREIGN SECRETARY ROMULO CONTINUES, PUBLICLY AT LEAST, TO DISMISS THE ENTIRE INCIDENT AS AN "APRIL FOOL JOKE."

13. THUS FAR THERE HAVE BEEN NO GOP OR PUBLIC CRITICISM OF THE HANDLING OF THE INCIDENT BY THE DEPARTMENT OR THE EMBASSY. INDEED, WELL CONNECTED COMMISSIONER OF IMMIGRATION REYES, IN A CONVERSATION APRIL 5 WITH AN EMBASSY OFFICER, GAVE THE EMBASSY HIGH MARKS FOR PROFESSIONALISM AND A FRIENDLY ATTITUDE IN THIS MATTER. ALSO, INTELLIGENCE CHIEF FABIAN

VER AND DIRECTOR OF CIVILIAN INTELLIGENCE AND SECURITY  
WILFREDO ESTRADA DID SHOW FOR MY DINNER APRIL 5 DURING  
WHICH VER VOLUNTEERED ONLY THAT ONE OF HIS OFFICERS HAD  
JUST RETURNED FROM SAN FRANCISCO WITH A COPY OF DEMOCRACY  
IN THE PHILIPPINES. EARLIER IN THE DAY VER HAD IMPLIED,  
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RPT IMPLIED, TO AN EMBASSY OFFICER THAT THE GOP NOW KNOWS  
THE WHEREABOUTS OF MACAPAGAL.

14. THE ABOVE IS, OF COURSE, LESS THAN DEFINITIVE AND NOT  
FULLY SATISFACTORY. WE SHALL REMAIN ALERT TO FURTHER CLUES  
WITHOUT, HOWEVER, BECOMING INVOLVED IN DISCUSSIONS,  
EITHER PUBLIC OR PRIVATE, ON THE MACAPAGAL CASE.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLITICAL ASYLUM, POLITICAL LEADERS, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 06 APR 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** izenbei0  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1976MANILA04796  
**Document Source:** CORE  
**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
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**Office:** ACTION SS  
**Original Classification:** SECRET  
**Original Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Original Previous Classification:** n/a  
**Original Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Page Count:** 5  
**Previous Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Previous Classification:** SECRET  
**Previous Handling Restrictions:** EXDIS  
**Reference:** 76 MANILA 4596  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** izenbei0  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 01 APR 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <01 APR 2004 by GarlanWA>; APPROVED <28 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MACAPAGAL: AN ASSESSMENT OF SORTS  
**TAGS:** PFOR, RP, US, (MACAPAGAL, DIOSDADO)  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006